The Untold Truth Behind Masterda Surya Sen's Hanging — As Preserved in the Mallick Family

Date of Event: 12 January 1934
Place: Chittagong Central Jail
Official Record: Masterda Surya Sen, revolutionary leader of the Chittagong Armoury Raid, was executed by hanging at dawn by the British colonial authorities. The official prison register states the execution was carried out by hangman *Shivlal Mallick*.

The Family's Account:
Passed down through generations of the Mallick family, a different story survives — one that never entered the colonial archives. Shivlal Mallick, the appointed executioner and great-grandfather of Sandeep Mallick, was **reluctant and morally opposed** to carrying out the execution. Known in the prison community as a man who quietly sympathized with India's freedom struggle, Shivlal was said to have been deeply distressed upon learning he had been chosen for the task. On the night of 11 January 1934, British officers allegedly summoned him under the pretext of "final preparations." According to family accounts, they used intimidation and false assurances, leading him to the gallows platform under guard.

The Crucial Moment:
When the final hour came, Shivlal Mallick reportedly stood frozen, refusing to touch the lever. At this point, as remembered in Mallick family oral history, **a British officer himself pulled the handle**, completing the execution. The official register, however, recorded Shivlal as the hangman — effectively sealing the narrative in paper, while hiding the reality.

Historical Context That Supports the Story: Colonial authorities often **controlled execution narratives** to maintain fear and suppress sympathy for revolutionaries. Many "official hangmen" in India under the British were coerced into service; refusal could mean imprisonment or worse. Oral histories of other freedom fighters' deaths also suggest **British officers directly interfered** in executions when they doubted the hangman's compliance.

Why This Matters:
This account is not merely about who pulled the lever — it's about the **human cost of colonial rule** and the silenced acts of resistance, big or small, that never made it into official history. Shivlal Mallick's silent refusal, if true, becomes a small but powerful act of dissent inside the very machinery meant to enforce British rule.